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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2008

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#### In Today's Papers

**High Justice Warns AKP and MHP against Headscarf Reforms**  
All papers report the Court of Appeals' Acting Chairman Osman Sirin said the AKP and MHP should heed the warnings from the judiciary regarding headscarf reforms. "It's impossible for the judiciary to not declare its views when the parliament attempts to change the constitution. We don't aim to intervene in the legislative process, but the authority of the parliament does not include touching on the principle of secularism, whether it be directly or indirectly," Sirin emphasized. Mainstream papers see Sirin's warning as the strongest warning from the judiciary so far. Papers report the AKP government responded swiftly, with Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin saying "the government is sensitive to protecting secularism."

**Erdogan and Bahceli Are Determined on Headscarf Freedom**  
All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan rejected suggestions from the opposition Democratic Left Party (DSP) that headscarf reform be postponed. DSP leader Sezer said, "I got the impression that Erdogan is seeking a solution. He seems to be committed to the matter, but he also said article 17 of the Higher Education Law can be discussed again." Article 17 describes how the headscarf should be tied. In a meeting with Sezer later in the day, opposition MHP leader Devlet Bahceli said the headscarf regulation should not be suspended. "Bahceli stressed he does not want to see a military coup in Turkey. He thinks once the headscarf issue is resolved, many concerns would drop significantly."

**Liberal Radikal says after the headscarf debate is over, the issue of 'Imam Hatip' high schools will return to the spotlight.** Imam Hatip schools train Muslim clergy in Turkey. During a meeting on Thursday, the High Education Board (YOK) is expected to adopt changes to university entrance exams which, Radikal argues, will benefit Imam Hatip students.

Meanwhile, papers report President Abdullah Gul stated he would not seek a referendum on the government plan to lift the headscarf ban in universities. "I've never found it right to hold referendums on basic rights and freedoms," Gul said in a meeting with prominent Turkish literary figures on Monday.

**Turkish Warplanes Strike PKK in Northern Iraq, DTP Protest Attacks**  
All papers report Turkish warplanes bombed PKK targets in the northern Iraqi villages of Avasin, Baysan, and Hakurk on Monday. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) released a statement saying nearly 70 terror targets in northern Iraq were destroyed during the air strikes. According to the TGS statement, "utmost care was shown to ensure that the civilian population in the region is not affected by the operation."

Meanwhile, papers report that on Thursday, 900 pro-Kurdish DTP members arrived in Sirnak province, on the border with Iraq, to call for an end to Turkish cross border operations against the PKK. The DTP members plan to set up tents on Kupeli Mountain in order to form a chain of human shields to protest Turkish strikes. Approximately 6,000 more DTP supporters are expected to arrive in the area today.

**Shays: 'US Shares Satellite Photos and Coordinates of PKK Camps'**  
Milliyet, Zaman and Yeni Safak report Congressman Chris Shays, member of the Intelligence Sharing and Risk Evaluation Sub-Committee, told the Voice of America Radio the US has provided Turkey with satellite photographs of PKK camps and activities in northern Iraq. "We also made it clear to the Iraqi government that the US would not allow the PKK to use northern Iraq as a base, and warned the Kurdish regional administration that they should face the PKK problem," emphasized Shays. He also called on Europe to "fully understand the fact that the PKK is a terror organization," papers report.

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#### **Nine Turks Killed in Fire in Germany**

All papers report a fire in Ludwigshafen, Germany killed nine Turks, including five children. Eight of the victims were killed by the flames, and one woman died when she jumped from the window. Mainstream Vatan claims the firefighters arrived late to the burning building. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak recalls an earlier arson attack by German racists targeting Turks in Solingen in 1993, and questions whether the fire in Ludwigshafen was another racially-motivated attack.

Papers report on Monday, Prime Minister Erdogan asked visiting German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble to "seriously investigate" the fire. The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) released a statement saying, "German authorities should conduct a comprehensive investigation into the fire by taking into consideration every possibility. If it was intentional, those responsible must be captured as soon as possible."

#### **Gul Appoints Names to Fill YOK Board Posts**

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report President Abdullah Gul made four new appointments on Monday to fill the vacant posts in the High Education Board (YOK). A press release by the Presidency said Gul appointed Turkish Board of Statistics (TUIK) President Omer Demir, Istanbul University Economy Department member Professor Berrak Kurtulus, Zonguldak University fellow Professor Durmus Gunay, and Professor Necmi Yuzbasilioglu to YOK seats.

Mainstream papers say Professor Gunay was an advocate of turban freedom in universities, and that he was also an AKP candidate who ran for parliament in Isparta in the July 22 general elections. Demir was appointed by the AKP to head TUIK and he initiated assessments of 'faith statistics' in Turkey, according to papers.

#### **Editorial Commentary: Kosovo, Ecumenical Status of Greek Orthodox Patriarchate**

Sami Kohen commented in mainstream Milliyet (2/5): "By electing the pro-Western candidate Tadic as president at the elections, Serbia

showed that its tendency is toward the EU rather than Russia. While delivering his first speech, the newly-elected President talked about his European vision and emphasized the new direction he planned for his country. Naturally, the West is very pleased with these results. Despite all these pro-Western plans, the developments in Kosovo will determine the route Belgrade is going to follow from now on. There are two well known facts in Serbia: 1. No matter who is elected as President in Serbia, Kosovo is determined to declare independence; 2. Tadic, also, just like pro-Russian Nikolic, is against Kosovo's independence. There is only a little difference on their style regarding Kosovo; Tadic supports a solution through negotiations and concession. It is obvious that in the upcoming days, there will be intensive diplomatic activities in the international platform. Kosovo is determined to declare independence in the near future and the support they receive from the EU and the US has encouraged them more. If President Tadic ignores US and EU support and boycotts an independent Kosovo, then, he will come up against the EU, and Tadic will put a distance between the West and Serbia. Only Russia will benefit from such a situation. In short, if events progress in this direction, political balances of Balkans will be faced with unknown results."

Oktay Eksi observed in mainstream Hurriyet (2/5): "Deeply involved in turban tensions, no one paid attention to the results of the Greek PM's visit to Turkey. PM Erdogan gave signals that his government had made and will continue to make changes in Turkish policies. According to PM Erdogan, the ecumenical status of the Fener Patriarchate was an issue of concern only to the Greek Orthodox Church. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan also commented on the issue and said "we should not regard the re-opening of Halki Seminary and the ecumenical issue as taboos. Let me clarify one thing: the

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ecumenical status of the Patriarchate is an issue concerning Turkey because it is an institution of the Turkish Republic and subject to Turkish law. This was a condition for the Patriarchate to stay in Turkey. By accepting the ecumenical status of the Patriarchate, Turkey will not be able to apply Turkish laws to its clerics. Moreover, by recognizing the ecumenical status, Turkey will not be able to object to a possible Patriarchate decision to re-open Halki Seminary. Because of all of this, the ecumenical status of the Patriarch is not something that should be left solely to the Orthodox Church."

TV News:  
NTV

#### Domestic News

- On Monday, the Prime Ministry said Prime Minister Erdogan will pay a state visit to Germany February 7-10. Erdogan will meet Chancellor Angela Merkel and attend the 44th Munich Conference on Security Policy.
- The Council of Europe is launching a new two-year technical cooperation project, "Ethics for the Prevention of Corruption in Turkey" (TYEC).
- On Monday, President Abdullah Gul hosted a luncheon for leading Turkish literary figures. The invitees included Dogan Hizlan, Selim Ileri, Adalet Agaoglu, Elif Safak, Rasim Ozdenoren, and Hilmi Yavuz.

#### International News

- Leading US presidential contenders make their final preparations for today's 'Super Tuesday' primaries and caucuses.
- A suicide bomber on Monday blew himself up in Dimona, the southern town that houses Israel's secretive nuclear reactor, killing at least one Israeli and wounding six.
- Israel's Environment Ministry stopped a Turkish ship at the Ashdod port after an oil spill was discovered around the vessel. WILSON